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REMARKS
OF
ROBERT LANSING

Secretary of State of the United States

AT
A LUNCHEON TO THE AMERICAN-MEXICAN
JOINT COMMISSION AT THE
HOTEL BILTMORE



NEW YORK CITY
SEPTEMBER 4, 1916



WASHINGTON
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GENTLEMEN: It is a great pleasure to me to be present at this first assembling of the American-Mexican Joint Commission which so clearly manifests to the world the spirit of good will and mutual regard which animates the Republics of America in the settlement of their controversies. It is not only a pleasure but an honor for me to tender to you on behalf of the President and Government of the United States greetings on this auspicious occasion and a hearty welcome to the Commissioners of Mexico, who have come so far to participate in these sessions.

With the pleasure and satisfaction of being here to-day there is also a full realization of the difficulty of the task which lies before you. It is no easy matter to reach an agreement as to the complex subjects of mutual interest to our two countries and to find a way which will satisfy not only the two Governments but also the peoples of the two nations. I believe that you, gentlemen, share with me the sincere desire to find that way and to bring the United States and Mexico into more complete accord by a just appreciation of the many domestic as well as international problems which each Government has had to face in these troublous times.

I need not assure you that my Government has been inspired throughout the past three years with a sincere desire to arrange in an amicable way the numerous questions which have arisen as a result of the civil strife which has shaken the Mexican Republic to its very foundations and has caused so much loss of life and property, so much suffering and privation. We have watched the progress of the revolution with anxious solicitude; we have tried to be fair in judgment and to see things from the point of view of those who control the destinies of Mexico; we have sought to be patient and to await the time when the approach of peace and order in Mexico would offer favorable opportunity for the adjustment of our difficulties; from first to last we have kept our minds free from rancor and bitterness and prejudice, and have in a spirit of disinterested friendliness confidently expected that the day would come

when the representatives of the two countries could meet and calmly and frankly discuss our international relations.

That day has at last arrived. The present conference is a realization of our expectation, and I look forward to its future accomplishment with assurance that it will settle the questions which have been causes of irritation. Its success depends in large measure—I think that I may say, entirely—upon the spirit which you, the commissioners of both Governments, evince when you come to discuss the various phases in our relations. If this spirit is one of frankness, of trust, of sympathy, it requires no prophet's vision to foresee that you will succeed; and, if you succeed, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have performed an inestimable service to your countries. But, if suspicion, doubt, and aloofness mark your deliberations, you may expect to accomplish little and leave the two nations in the same tangle of misunderstandings and false judgments which I feel have been the chief reasons for our controversies in the past.

The responsibility rests with you, gentlemen. The burden is not a light one, but you have generously and patriotically assumed it in response to the call of your Governments. I am sure that the American commissioners, whom I know so well, and the Mexican commissioners, for whom I have high respect, knowing from others of their distinguished attainments, will show that consideration and patience which will bring you into harmony and agreement.

It is not my purpose to dwell upon the subjects which will be considered by the commission. The immediate subject and the immediate cause of your meeting here to-day is the situation along the international boundary. I believe that a temporary solution could be readily found, but the Government of the United States seeks a permanent, not a temporary, settlement of the difficulty, and I feel assured that the Government of Mexico desires nothing less. To reach such a settlement, one that will be lasting and sure, it will be necessary to go to the root of the matter, to consider international rights and duties, and to discuss the relation of the individual to the state as well as the relation of the state to the individual, subjects fundamental to social order and to the intercourse between enlightened governments.

It seems to me that if you would reach a complete adjustment of the matters affecting our relations which will satisfy the future as

well as the present you can not avoid considering the personal rights and economic interests of Americans who have found in Mexico a field for their energies. It is through the consideration of such subjects that the seeds of future controversy can be destroyed and entire confidence restored, so that the Mexican Government and people may build on the ruins of war and disorder a new and more lasting prosperity than the Republic has ever known, a prosperity founded on liberty and justice under a government supported by the united will of a free people.

This, gentlemen, I conceive to be your task; and I hope most earnestly that your sphere of discussion will widen as you meet from day to day, so that every obstacle, which has arisen or which might hereafter arise to vex the cordial relations of your Governments, may be removed, and your two countries and their peoples may be drawn into a closer union cemented by friendship and good will and by that mutual respect for justice which should govern all nations in their intercourse with one another.

To the commission as a whole I look with confident hope that they will succeed in the great mission with which they have been charged, and I know that this hope is near to the hearts of the millions of Americans and Mexicans who are watching you to-day as you enter upon the performance of your duties.







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